

SM 062820

Strangers in a Very Strange Place

Sunday Morning Message

Text – Hebrews 11:1 - 19

Congregational Reading – Hebrews 11:13 - 16

Introduction

Read the text.

The Bible very clearly instructs that the people of God have always been strangers and pilgrims on the earth, meaning that this world is not our final home. We are only here for a short while, and very soon we will be going to our final home, which is in Heaven. The fact that that statement sounds strange to some of us is really a sad indictment on the fact that God's people have become far too accustomed and comfortable with living here on this earth, and especially in this nation – America.

This world that we are living in is getting stranger and stranger. This pandemic, which does not seem to be going away, has got us bunkered down in our homes and isolated from one another. God's people were never supposed to be separated from each other. We are commanded to gather together often for corporate worship and prayer, and to receive encouragement and instructions from the Lord.

And now our nation is also in the midst of racial tension, which has spawned a radical political anarchy that is threatening to destroy the constitution foundation and eradicate the freedoms that we have enjoyed. Our liberties are quickly being removed.

Illustrate – My position on current events:

Slavery was and is an abomination. I am ashamed that our great nation would ever tolerate the institution. I am even more grieved that some of God's people have been guilty of supporting slavery. The Southern Baptist Convention of churches split from their sister churches in the north over the slavery issue.

When Daniel was praying in Babylon, after the people of God, Israel, were ripped out of their nation, he confessed the sins of his people, and he included himself:

"We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah,

and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee." (Daniel 9:5-7)

Nehemiah did as well:

"Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses." (Nehemiah 1:6-7)

America – we need to confess and repent of the fact that we were guilty of tolerating and supporting slavery.

Discrimination of any race of people is wrong. Even after slavery was abolished, black people suffered persecution and discrimination. Other groups of people did as well: the Irish did; the Italians did; the Chinese who came here experienced it as well; the Vietnamese refugees who came here during and after the war experienced it also. When I was a kid, it was the Puerto Ricans who lived in our town who were the group that many were discriminating against. All groups of people have probably at one time or another been the victims of persecution and discrimination. I know that Baptist people and other born-again Bible believers have been persecuted and many millions of them were slaughtered, from the time of Christ even up until this present time.

All discrimination is wrong; all persecution is wrong.

However, America's sins do not end with slavery and discrimination. Since the time of *Roe vs. Wade* in 1973, we have also been the murderers of our unborn babies by the millions.

We are also a nation of drunkards and drug addicts. Alcohol has killed far more people than this pandemic has, but you don't hear anyone screaming about alcohol. According to an article by the National Institutes of Health, alcohol related deaths in 2017 represented 2.6% of all deaths (or 72,558)¹, and that did not include drunk driving accidents, which represented another nearly 11,000 deaths in that same year.²

¹ <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/alcohol-related-deaths-increasing-united-states>

² <https://www.alcohol.org/guides/drunk-driving-accidents-by-state/>

As a nation, we are also tolerating and promoting immorality. We have completely thrown in the towel on trying to say that anything is wrong sexually. Homosexuality, bisexuality, transgenderism; the list goes on and on – these are all clearly wrong, biblically – but we have long ago thrown out the Bible as a nation.

America's big problem is sin. Skin problems are just one of many sin problems here in our nation. America has completely forsaken God.

Our nation has gone completely crazy: autonomous zones in Seattle and Minneapolis; defunding the police in many cities; destruction of public and private property; there is a homeless man who has taken over a park fountain in New York City. He bathes in it in full view of the public. The police will not go near him; they are afraid to do anything about him. America is becoming more strange every day.

My main mission in life is not to rally the troops to bring America back. My main mission in life is to get God's people to bring God back into America.

1. We are only sojourners here on the earth.

Lester Roloff once made the statement that the problem with too many Christians is that they get their tent pegs nailed down too tightly to this earth.

"This world is not my home, I'm just a passing through; my treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue."

Don't live like this earth is all you have. Live for Heaven. Give your life for that which is eternal. Make sure your time, talent, and treasures are invested in Kingdom of God. Live for the Lord.

Make the best of the journey; enjoy the journey as much as you can; have some fun along the way; but don't live for the journey; live for the destination, which is Heaven.

We are only here on this earth temporarily, and we have a job to do. We are to reach this world for Christ by preaching His gospel. We have been commissioned by our Savior to: "... *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*" (Mark 16:15)

We are ambassadors here on the earth for the Lord Jesus Christ.

*"Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. **Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.** For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."* (2 Corinthians 5:16-21)

2. We are to be separated while we are here on the earth.

When Jacob and his sons had to sojourn in Egypt, he asked Pharaoh if his family could tend their flocks in the land of Goshen. Goshen was out in the country, away from the city. Jacob's family would be separated from the bulk of the population of Egypt in a very fertile valley (Genesis 47:4).

Jesus said that those that belong to him should live "in the world," but we are not to be "of the world."

"I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." (John 17:14)

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Romans 12:1-2)

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." (1 John 2:15-17)

We are to love the people of the world as Jesus does. We need to preach the gospel to them, but we have to be very careful that as we are influencing them for the Lord, that they are not influencing us with their godless and worldly philosophies.

3. We are to be a support (a blessing) to the people of this earth.

The world may not like our biblical position, but they ought not have any beef with our disposition. We are to love people and we are to try to help them wherever possible. We certainly want to give them the Word of God, but we ought also to help them in tangible ways. Feed the hungry, etc. Loving people is tangible; it is expressed in ways that people can see as well as feel. We are not supposed to love the world system, but we are definitely supposed to love the people in the world.

Pray for them.

Preach Christ to them with both our words and our works (actions).

Be profitable to them.

Be productive members of society.

4. We need to stay closely connected to our true Home while we are sojourning down here on Earth.

Spend time daily in the Word of God and prayer.

Stay closely connected to the local church. The local church is the place on earth where the citizens of Heaven gather to worship God, and to be instructed of Him, and be reminded often of our mission, which is why we are here.

Conclusion

Everything I said this morning applies only to saved people; those who have received the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour. If you are not yet saved, you need to trust Him today. You need to recognize the fact that you are a sinner deserving nothing but judgment in Hell. The good is that Jesus died on the cross and shed His blood in full atonement for your sins, and He now offers you the gift of forgiveness, a pardon that will allow you to live with Him forever as His child. All you have to do is believe.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

To those of you who are saved:

Someday, very soon, you are going to arrive at the end of your earthly pilgrimage. You may live a very long life, or you may be called home early. When your time does come, will you be able to say like the Apostle Paul, *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."*

Too many Christians are forsaking the will of God choosing, like Demas, the love of this present world. Friend, let me encourage you to finish your course; to keep the faith. For all of eternity you will be rewarded for what you did here. Live for God. Be filled with His Holy Spirit; be directed by His Word and surrender to His will.

And when you get to Heaven, you will hear the Lord say, *"...Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."* (Matthew 25:23)

This world is not our home. We are only strangers and pilgrims here. *"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:"* (Philippians 3:20) Are you looking for Jesus?

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:1-2)